

Report of Debate Conducted by  
the Chicago Forum

“Shall the Negro Be Encouraged  
to Seek Cultural Equality?”

*Affirmative:* W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Harvard, Ph.D.; Director National Association for Advancement of the Colored People and Editor of *The Crisis* since 1910; author of *The Soul of Black Folk*, *The Negro*, *Dark Water*, *The Gift of Black Folk*, *The Dark Princess*, etc.

*Negative:* Lothrop Stoddard, Harvard, Ph.D.; Author of *The Rising Tide of Color*, *The Revolt Against Civilization*, *Reforging America*, and of many magazine articles on race problems from the Nordic viewpoint.

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FRED ATKINS MOORE, *Presiding*  
Director of the Chicago Forum



## Introduction by the Chairman

**EVERYBODY** in the hall this afternoon, in addition to being interested in this particular debate, I trust will understand the auspices under which this meeting is held. This is a regular Sunday afternoon meeting of the Chicago Forum for the discussion of vital questions of public interest. That means that the Forum is neither white nor black, neither radical nor conservative; that it takes no stand on any questions whatsoever; but that it does believe in free open discussion of every question that affects vitally our common life. This afternoon we have one such question for discussion. I think everyone here will agree with me that it is the kind of question that is seldom brought out into the open to be discussed in the light of day, and to be discussed from at least two important sides as it will be presented here today. Now I want everybody to feel that his side or her side is going to be presented; that our two speakers this afternoon are amply able to present their own views and that they do not need either your help or mine [laughter]. So I trust that you will let them have the right of way in their speaking without interruption for applause. We have a half hour period for each speaker, and applause simply detracts from the time given him; so let us refrain from applauding except at the end of the speeches.

The two speakers have been amply made known to you—Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, unquestionably one of the ablest speakers for his race not only in America but in the whole wide world—and Dr. Lothrop Stoddard, whose books and writings and speaking have made his views known to many hundreds of thousands of people both in this country and abroad. We have these speakers who will talk frankly and we will listen with equal openness of mind, respecting the sincerity of the speakers even though we disagree with one or the other.

Without further introduction, except to state the question: "Shall the Negro Be Encouraged to Seek Cultural Equality?"—let me present Dr. DuBois who will speak in the affirmative.  
[applause]

## Affirmative Speech by Dr. DuBois

**W**E may well ask in the beginning: just what does one mean by "equality"? And what is "cultural" equality? We might even ask, just what are "Negroes?"—and, how are you going to "encourage" anyone to seek this sort of equality?

I am going to take the broad commonsense view of what these words mean. By equality, I do not mean absolute identity or similarity of gift, but gifts of essentially equal value to human culture. By culture, I mean that organized life which men call civilization. And persons are encouraged to seek cultural equality by the taking down of bars and doing away with discriminations—by abolishing all efforts that directly or indirectly impede people in attaining a certain goal.

If you were not familiar with the race problem in the United States or in the modern world, you would ask: Why should you not encourage Negroes or anybody else in the wide world to seek cultural equality? Is not this the aim of civilization? Is it not the ideal for which all men yearn? What could you conceive as better than a world in which all citizens were not only encouraged to cultural equality but accomplished their aim? Would not this be the best conceivable sort of world?

And yet you who know America, know perfectly well that large numbers of people have always denied to the Negro even the chance to try to reach such a goal. This denial has taken two forms or perhaps two degrees of emphasis on the same thesis. In early days, Americans said frankly:—The Negro should not be encouraged to seek cultural equality because he cannot reach it; he is not really human in the sense that other people are human. One does not encourage dogs to do the things that men do, not because one has anything against dogs, but because dogs are not men and cannot act like men. And in the same way, (although perhaps the analogy is overdrawn) Americans do not encourage Negroes to share modern culture because they cannot share it; we would simply make them unhappy if we let them try to reach to things which they can never reach.

Some years ago that was a logical statement and a state-

ment difficult to answer. But in the last generation things have happened, and they have happened fast. We have had since the emancipation a bounding forward of these millions of dark people in America. It does not make any difference how far you may wish to minimize what Negroes have done or what judgment you have as to its lasting value, there is no real doubt about the work that has been done by these millions of emancipated slaves and their descendants in America. It is one of the wonderful accomplishments of this generation. It has few parallels in human history.

Some people might assume that this rise of the American Negro from slavery to freedom, from squalor, poverty and ignorance to thrift and intelligence and the beginnings of wealth, would bring unstinted applause. Negroes themselves expected this. They looked eagerly forward to this day when you cannot write a history or statement of American civilization and leave the black man out, as proof of their equality and manhood and they expected their advance, incomplete and imperfect though it remains, nevertheless, to be greeted with applause.

On the contrary, all Negroes know that with all the generous praise given us there has been no phase of their advance that has not been looked on with a strong undercurrent of apprehension. America has feared the coming forward of these black men; it has looked upon it as a sort of threat,—and if you should ask just why that is so, white Americans would state the thesis which they have stated before, but with some modification; they would say that the coming forward of these people does not prove that they can make as great a gift to culture as the white people have made; but, whether they can or not, they must not be allowed to come forward because it threatens civilization! If you ask how this can possibly be,—how the advance of one-tenth of a nation can be a threat to the rest,—you have various kinds of answers.

In the first place some seem to regard culture as a quantitative sort of thing; there is a certain amount of culture in the world; if you divide it up among all people you have that much less for other people. Of course everybody knows that the quantitative theory of civilization does not hold, that the analogy is not perfect, and yet the reason we use it is because we do regard civilization today in terms of the number of our

physical possessions. We are buried beneath our material wealth, and if we think, say, of motor cars, we conclude that if black people have motor cars, there are so many less for the white people to occupy. And so on. We go through the whole catalog of what a material age calls civilization, and think that if it is distributed to certain people, other people are not going to have as much.

Discarding this quantitative analogy we fall back to another argument. After all, it is not the things which people have that makes the major part of civilization—the real civilization; real culture depends on quality and not quantity; it is not, therefore, so much a matter of distribution of goods,—of dilution of quantity as of contamination of quality in goods and deeds.

And then we have brought back into the modern world the theory which the world has held and heard again and again;—a few people have the chance to get unusual advancement; they have the chance to learn; they have leisure to think; they have food and shelter and encouragement; they push forward in the world, and then, after they have reached certain heights, suddenly they are overcome with admiration for themselves; suddenly it is suggested to them that they are wonderful and unusual people; that the universe was made particularly and especially for them; that the universe has no meaning except as it caters to them; that never before have human beings attained such height and mastery,—and finally we have the theory of the Chosen People!

The theory is as old as human culture is old, and yet today it comes back to us today in the new dress of the belief that everything that has been done in modern times has been done by the Nordic people; that they are the people who are the salt of the earth; that if anything is done to change their type of civilization, then civilization fails and falls; that what we have got to be afraid of is the coming forward of a mass of dark people without real gift, without real knowledge of what culture is, who are going to spoil the divine gifts of the Nordics.

To a theory of this sort, the world—that overwhelming majority of human beings who are not Nordic—have a right to two replies:

*First*, your theory is unproven. There is no scientific

proof that modern culture is of Nordic origin or that Nordic brains and physique are of better intrinsic quality than Mediterranean, Indian, Chinese or Negro. In fact, the proofs of essential human equality of gift are overwhelming.

*But*; if Nordics believe in their own superiority; if they wish voluntarily to work by themselves and for the development and encouragement of their own gifts; if they prefer not to mingle their blood with other races, or contaminate their culture with foreign strains, nothing is to hinder them from carrying out this program except themselves.

Nobody is going to make Nordics marry outside of their group unless they want to marry outside. They can keep their group closed if they wish. Of course, civilization is by the definition of the term, civilization for all mankind; but nobody is going to withhold applause if you make your contribution to the world.

Of course, civilization is the rightful heritage of all men and cannot be monopolized and confined to one group. But group organization to increase and forward culture is legitimate and will bring its reward in universal recognition and applause.

But this has never been the Nordic program. Their program is the subjection and rulership of the world for the benefit of the Nordics. They have overrun the earth and brought not simply modern civilization and technique, but with it exploitation, slavery and degradation to the majority of men. They have broken down native family life, desecrated the homes of weaker peoples and spread their bastards over every corner of land and sea. They have been responsible for more intermixture of races than any other people, ancient and modern, and they have inflicted this miscegenation on helpless unwilling slaves by force, fraud and insult; and this is the folk that today has the impudence to turn on the darker races, when they demand a share of civilization, and cry:

"You shall not marry our daughters!"

The blunt, crude reply is: Who in Hell asked to marry your daughters? If this race problem must be reduced to a matter of sex, what we demand is the right to protect the decency of our own daughters.

But the insistent demand of the Darker World is far wider and deeper than this. The black and brown and yellow men

demand the right to be men. They demand the right to have the artificial barriers placed in their path torn down and destroyed; they demand a voice in their own government; the organization of industry for the benefit of colored workers and not merely for white owners and masters; they demand education on the broadest and highest lines and they demand as human beings social contact with other human beings on a basis of perfect equality.

That is what they call civilization. That is what we American Negroes demand and the demand is so reasonable and logical that to deny it is not simply to hurt and hinder them, it is to fly in the face of your own white civilization.

Think of what has been done in the name of "white supremacy" right here in the United States; the Middle West today is politically helpless because in order to deprive black Americans of the right to vote, they allowed the South to cast two votes—the vote of the white man and of the disfranchised Negro. The double political power of these rotten boroughs of the South makes democratic government in the United States a farce.

You decry lawlessness. Where do you get the lawlessness of Chicago and of the United States? You began it when as a nation you disregarded the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments and then are vastly surprised when you cannot enforce the 18th. You have organized your life so as not to carry out the laws which you yourselves made and you have the heritage of lawlessness to pay for it.

You have created here in the United States, which today pretends to the moral leadership of the world, a situation where on the last night of the old year you can slowly and publicly burn a human being alive for the amusement of Americans who represent some of the purest strains of Nordic blood in that great place, Mississippi, which has done so much for the civilization of the world!

Not simply in these things have you attacked your own civilization. You have made it almost impossible for America to think logically.

I said to you a while ago that I might ask you what Negroes were. I come back to that question. I stand here gladly as the representative of the Negro race, and yet I know and you know that I can equally stand here as a representative

of the Nordic race. Whenever it seems necessary to deny me any privilege, then I am a Negro, and whenever I do anything that is worth doing, suddenly I become preponderately white. \* The United States measured soldiers in the great war and came to wonderful conclusions concerning their intelligence, but the conclusions they came to were conclusions for the Negro race, and they knew perfectly well the men they were measuring were not Negroes, but that perhaps 70 per cent of them had white blood. It is impossible by any scientific measurement to divide men into races, and even to prove there are separate races, and yet we talk about races, and prescribe races and measure races; and because we are not talking logically when we talk about races, so we cannot talk logically about anything else—the tariff, farm relief, unemployment, credit, wages or capital.

The matter of our logic is not nearly so important as that of our ethics and religion. Here you are, a great white nation with a magnificent Plan of Salvation. You have an ethical code far beyond anything the world ever knew—if you do not believe it, listen to what you preach to the darker peoples. You are followers of the Golden Rule and of the meek and lowly Jesus. Yet you do not try to follow out your own religion because you know when your religion comes up against the race problem that religion has nothing absolutely to do with your attitude toward Negroes. The attacks that white people themselves have made upon their own moral structure are worse for civilization than anything that any body of Negroes could ever do.

Therefore, you stand today before the Great Alternative. Are you going to allow the colored people in the United States and the colored races in the world to go forward toward the goals of civilization free and unhampered, or are you going to organize to see that these people are kept in the places where you think they ought to stay? Here is a great decision, a decision which the white world has got to face.

\* The temptation to hold these colored people back is tremendous, because it is not merely a matter of academic wish or of wanton prejudice, but it is the kernel of the organization of modern life. You have got colored people working for you all through the world. You have got your investments so made that they depend upon colored labor in Asia, Africa, in the

Southern states of the United States, and in the islands of the Sea. Your income and your power depends upon that organization being kept intact. If it is overthrown, if these black laborers get higher wages, if they begin to understand what life may be, if they increase in knowledge, self-assertion and power, it means the overthrow of the whole system of exploitation which is at the bottom of modern white civilization. What now is your decision?

Suppose you turn to the other side. Suppose you say, despite anything that the Darker races, including the Negroes in the United States, may ask, we are going to sit tight and keep them where they belong. Then the question is, can you do it?

In the first place, have you the ability to do it? It is going to call for ability. It is going to call for brains and genius of the highest order, and looking back upon the history of what you have done with the colored world, you have no right to preen yourselves on what you are going to do in the future. A few years ago you fell out among yourselves, not because of any quarrel you had with each other, but on the question as to how you were going to divide among yourselves territory and raw materials belonging to colored people.—The World War was a matter of jealousy in the division of the spoils of Asia and Africa, and by it you nearly ruined civilization. Have you the genius and the brains to carry out further an organization of men by which the white people of the world are going to sit on top of it, using it mainly for their own advantage and make the rest of the world serve?

\* If you have the ability to do this, there then comes the next question: have you the Force? Have you the physical force and the machines to do it? Oh, you can do it in the United States. You outnumber us ten to one. You can sweep us off the face of the earth. You can starve us to death or make us wish we had starved to death in the face of your insults. But, remember, you are standing before the whole world, with hundreds of darker millions watching. No matter what happens to us, these colored people of the world are not going to take forever the kind of treatment they have been taking. They have got beyond that. They have come to the place where they know what civilization is, and if you are going to keep them in their places, you are going to do it by brute force. Have you got the force, and is it likely that you are going to get it?

Finally, when it comes to this program, have you got the moral courage to do it? Can you present to the world a closed group which is going to carry forward this program of the domination of the majority of men by a picked few? You have not got unanimity now. Right in your own group are people who do not believe in your program. And in your group are millions of others who would not join in any such undertaking if they understood what they were asked to do and if they were not misled by propaganda which makes "white supremacy" look like a holy crusade instead of the unholy thing it is. It takes great moral courage to do right, but deliberately to do wrong calls for more courage than most people possess. It is a question then whether this white world with the things it has done, is going to be able to marshal itself in a great offensive against the races of dark people. If they are going to do this simply because today they happen to have the power, who and where are the people who have talked about humanity, the people who are spreading true religion in the world, who are the followers of the Prince of Peace? Are these the nations who are going out to keep down beneath the feet of civilization those races who can never be held there? [much applause.]

MR. MOORE: Well, if we didn't know it before, we now know that Dr. DuBois has some friends in the house. [applause.] In the Forum, as I have said before, we speak the truth openly and frankly. I am very sure that Dr. Stoddard comes here knowing that this is an audience mainly made up of the friends and the sympathizers with the point of view of Dr. DuBois. But I am also very sure that every man and woman here this afternoon is going to have high respect for Dr. Stoddard's courage in coming here to face this issue, to speak his convictions and to put before you what for many of you will be an unpopular point of view. I am glad we can have the privilege of having with us one who has given to the world opinions that have been so widely accepted; and inasmuch as that is true, we are glad to have it presented here openly, frankly and courageously. [applause.]

## Negative Speech by Dr. Stoddard

\* **N**OTHING is more unfortunate than delusion. The Negro has been the victim of delusion ever since the Civil War. At the time of the emancipation certain white enthusiasts promised the Negro full social equality and racial amalgamation. All that has proved a dream. Half a century after emancipation the color line, which by the way is the oldest of American social policies—laid down since earliest colonial times more than three centuries ago—remains in full force, and in the south a system of race contact based upon segregation has been thoroughly worked out. In practically every social aspect of life the races are completely segregated. Furthermore, to this system most of American Negrodom has adjusted itself. In the south a full fledged Negro society has evolved. This evolution has been remarkably thorough. Starting at the time of emancipation with a virtually undifferentiated social mass, you have today a full fledged Negro society with grades of all kinds, and as a result of that social differentiation you have careers and social satisfactions for talented Negroes on their own side of the color line. Yet a minority remains dissatisfied, and most of that active dissatisfied minority is in the north. The basic reason for this dissimilarity is very simple. It is because until very recently the northern Negroes were too few in numbers to evolve a real society of their own such as has been the case in the south. In other words, until recent years there have been no large Negro groups in the north where the talented young Negro could find his career and where the successful Negro could obtain the social satisfactions that are to be found in their own groups in the southland. However, as you all know, the situation has changed of recent years. The great northward trek of Negroes since 1915 especially, coupled with a certain amount of immigrant Negro influx from the West Indies and Latin America, has made possible large urban groups among Negroes in nearly all northern cities with rapidly evolving social life and furthermore with rapidly increasing economic well being.

As a natural by-product you have the appearance of an educated intelligentsia—to use the term so much in vogue; that

is, a group of people educated and interested in intellectual affairs. Now among that intelligentsia you have a considerable number of persons with marked artistic talent and literary talent, and it is in the writings of this northern intelligentsia that you find the eloquent spokesmen who reject the system of the south and demand social equality in white America. Eloquently voiced as these demands are, they have raised fresh hopes and a corresponding unrest.

Now if these hopes are vain as were those of half a century ago, it is a highly unfortunate situation, because it will merely mean increased disillusionment, increased bitterness and increased unhappiness among these Negro groups themselves. When we look at the situation, whether we survey it north, south, east or west, there is only one conclusion I believe that \* we can come to and that is that white America is resolved not to abolish the color line.

Now why is this determination as strong today as it ever was? Why is it being reinforced by so many arguments drawn from the progress of modern science? The basic reason is not so much theories concerning the Negro's alleged inferiority—widespread as those beliefs may be—but the basic fact is that he is different. In fact, this matter of white and Negro relations in the United States is only a part of a larger whole. If you go to the Pacific coast you will find a similar attitude on the part of the white people in regard to the Chinese and Japanese, although there are comparatively few well informed white persons who hold that the Japanese and Chinese are inferiors. But those same persons who are well acquainted with the qualities and gifts of the Chinese and Japanese and the value of their civilization, hold no less surely that the Chinese and Japanese are different. If there were a great influx of Chinese and Japanese in this country—if they were not kept out by the immigration exclusion laws—those people on the coast feel that amalgamation with large numbers of such different racial groups as the Chinese and Japanese would mean a fatal impairment of their peculiar white civilization—not necessarily a civilization that is superior, but a civilization that is their own. The same thing is true in the southwest in the attitude towards the recent influx of Mexican Indians—and certainly the examples of Mexico and Caribbean America where you have had thoroughly mixed populations, the political and

social instability and the generally unbalanced nature of their national life, has made the vast majority of white Americans feel more and more the necessity of keeping white America unimpaired. It is not fundamentally a matter of superiority or inferiority *per se*; it is a matter of racial difference.

Thus you can see the stock argument put forward by the Negro intelligentsia of the north for cultural equality is fallacious. The arguments do not go deep enough because they do not get down to bed rock, for even though the Negro should produce enough talented individuals to disprove the current white ideas of Negro inferiority, all this would not in the least touch the great fundamental matter of race difference. Now there you have it, and at first sight it would seem as though white America's resolute rejection of the Negro intelligentsia's insistent demands might leave us in the face of a hopeless dilemma; that it might be as Dr. DuBois has said, simply a matter of brute force. But so far as I am concerned and, I believe, so far as very many thoughtful persons are concerned, this matter does not seem so difficult when we come to analyze it more carefully.

First let us analyze this term *cultural equality*. What does it mean? It seems to me the term cultural equality demands coupling together two different root ideas: On the one hand, cultural recognition, and on the other, social equality. Now each of these ideas taken separately has a definite meaning. We all can understand what we mean by cultural recognition and what we mean by social equality, but when we arbitrarily telescope them together into the term cultural equality it seems to me that we get one of those high sounding terms which need a deal of explaining. Set off by itself cultural equality means about the same as the word Mesopotamia. To the Negro intelligentsia, on the one hand, it obviously implies social equality and racial amalgamation. To many other persons it might mean fair reception and cordial appreciation of the work and profession of Negro talent with no logical implication of social equality and the abolition of the color line. So let us quit phrases and get down to brass tacks. Every cultured Negro should ask himself one serious question—what is it that he really wants? Does he want cultural recognition or does he want social equality? Now if he does thus ponder the matter, can he fail to realize that to demand social equality is about

the worst way to attain the maximum of cultural recognition from the white American public? As already stated, white  
\* America is resolved not to jeopardize its race integrity. Now that possibility being ruled out, cannot the intelligent Negroes see that insofar as their race puts forth cultural fruits, these will receive recognition much more quickly and much more sympathetically from a friendly white America than from a white America angered and estranged by demands which it deems inimical to itself? In other words, to bring it down a little more to cases, can sincere Negro poets, litterateurs, painters, artists, singers—can they really believe that their art will be fairly and cordially appreciated in an atmosphere chilled by aversion and poisoned by racial antagonism? Let them remember what happened to the American public's reception of German art and music when the American public was swayed by the passions of wartime ten or twelve years ago. Let them remember what always happens when public opinion is alarmed and disturbed, when it is in an abnormal condition. It is the old fable of the sun and wind. To force cultural recognition coupled with the demand for social equality will make white America shut its eyes to Negro talent and pull the cloak of indifference around its frame. No. If it be cultural recognition and appreciation that the cultured Negroes really want, let them get after their insurgent intelligentsia who are today seeking to use their art as a battering ram to smash the color line. For art was intended for no such purpose, and if it is used in that way most of this rapidly budding Negro talent today will be blighted and perverted into propaganda and vain bitterness in the attempt. Now fortunately, very fortunately, there was a most intelligent Negro who recognized just this situation. There is, fortunately for the future relations of both these races in this country, another school of thought in American Negrodom, a school typified by Booker Washington and by his successors, men like Dr. Moton of Tuskegee and others. Now Booker Washington put the case in a nut shell, it seems to me, many years ago in that famous address of his when he used his memorable phrase—"In all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers; yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." And beginning with that hopeful speech of his which did so much to lift American Negrodom from bitterness and disillusionment

which it had fallen into since reconstruction days, you have the steady improvement of interracial relations, typified by the Committee in Interracial Cooperation which is functioning so well throughout the south where in hundreds of localities from cities to small towns the best elements of both races meet constantly on a footing of mutual helpfulness and mutual respect. It seems to me that along this line lies the hope of the future, lies the hope of peaceful and friendly relations between the two races in America.

What is this development and how can it best be expressed? What is this system of interracial relations working out? It can be described in one word—bi-racialism. Now let us see for a moment what bi-racialism is, or rather, what it is not. In the first place, bi-racialism is not discrimination; it is separation. The forward-looking white men of the south realize the many discriminations and injustices that the Negroes have been forced to undergo, and they are doing their best—the more enlightened men of southern white America, and in other parts of the country—they are doing their best to see that separation shall not mean discrimination; that if the Negroes have separate schools, they shall be good schools; that if they have separate train accommodations, they shall have good accommodations. [laughter] Secondly. Bi-racialism does not imply relative questions of superiority or inferiority, but it is based upon the self evident fact of difference. Now that is a very important point, because the formula of difference is a formula on which intelligent men and women of both races can meet on a footing of mutual respect. Third. Bi-racialism is not caste; and I will tell you the reason why. Because caste divides the population of a given country horizontally into fixed layers, and it is impossible under a pure caste system, say as in India, for a person to rise upward in the social scale. A man lives and dies as he is born in a certain social stratum. Now bi-racialism does just the contrary. It takes the population and it divides it vertically, the two races, —makes one clean line from top to bottom; and then leaves both races free to rise on their own side of the line. Of course no institution is perfect and there will be many difficulties in adjusting such a system, but a beginning has been made and it is along these lines that hope lies. For this matter of racial adjustment should be visualized not as a ready made program

—not as a program at all, but as a process evolving normally as the result of thought and study and experience and commonsense. That is the way anything grows that is an organic growth that is really worth while and that has a future before it.

Now that is the alternative to the dilemma that I sketched forth at the beginning of my address. Intelligent Negroes it seems to me should realize that bi-racialism is infinitely better than rebellion, bitterness, and vain hopes. Cultural equality which is today being urged by the insurgent Negro intelligentsia is a vain dream because as I say it tries to telescope two separate and distinct ideas together, because it tries to couple in an illogical combination the root ideas of cultural recognition on the one hand and social equality, on the other. The thing cannot be done. It won't work. It will prove a dream, and disillusionment and bitterness will be the inevitable fruit thereof. But if cultural equality is a dream, cultural recognition of Negro talent and achievement is not a dream. It already exists in good measure. A singer like Roland Hayes is acclaimed by white audiences everywhere in America. The books of the leading exponents of Negro thought, such as Dr. DuBois, have a large and appreciative white audience. I know that I treasure Dr. DuBois' books in my own library as valuable and eloquent expressions of the attitude of his section of American Negrodom. [applause] The works of the younger Negro poets and novelists are being received. That they are being received well is evidenced by their very satisfactory sales in those parts of America where a Negro clientage would naturally be unable to support them, and by the cordial encouragement given to them by the white reviewers in the leading newspapers and magazines of the country. This cultural recognition is not a dream. It is here,—it is with us, and it is growing. Now is that what the cultured Negro wants? If he wants that, he is getting it, and the best way for him is to follow his art, to follow his culture, to get friendly recognition and appreciation for his art, but not to bring in this question of social equality, not to try to confuse the art with the individual. If he does that—if he steers clear of that danger, cultural recognition already so pronounced will be extended more fully and more spontaneously, and it will be extended more fully and spontaneously by white America precisely in

the measure that a sane and stable policy of racial relations, such as the bi-racial program I have sketched, based on existing realities and not on theories however beguiling, is evolved. As I see it, therein lies the hope for the cultured Negro, for American Negrodom as a whole, and for America as a whole, including the two races which inhabit this common land of ours. [applause]

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## Rebuttal Statement by Dr. DuBois

**P**ERHAPS I can best answer the argument of Dr. Stoddard by saying something as to my personal reaction to what he calls social equality. For a long time in addressing audiences on the Negro problem I very carefully kept from touching that subject, and I did so not on account of fear but because it honestly seemed to me to have nothing to do with the main thesis of the advance of the Negro in the United States. It seemed to me a thing quite beside the point; consequently I said nothing about it. If anyone brought it up I tried to pass it off with some gay remark and in every way I tried to center the thought of my audience upon the thought that the question of the social relations of white and colored people in the United States was not the crux of the Negro problem.

Now I talk frankly about social equality, not because I have changed my belief at all but because I have come to realize that in the minds of most white people in the United States social contact is the center of the Negro problem, and consequently, if I do not talk about it I am not really touching the thing in which they are interested.

Now to come down to the main thesis of Dr. Stoddard's remarks. He says the white people of the United States are determined they will not mingle their blood with others. Very good. Who is going to make them? Who today is trying to make them? I will not be facetious and ask when white Americans came to this conclusion. Assume that the past is past, and that the thoughtful white people of the United States, and of the world,—are saying that it is best that white blood be confined to white people. Now do the white people think the colored world objects to that? I think most of them do. It seems to me that always when a white man talks to me about this race problem he looks at me with a speculative eye that says, you are concealing something; what you really want is to be white! And apparently there is no use trying to argue with him about it; it is an obsession with him. He says, as Dr. Stoddard says, "When you are asking for cultural recognition, that is not what you mean. What you want is amalgamation,"—and then he makes the astounding statement that after

Emancipation the object of the Negro and the promise of his friends was racial amalgamation! Continually in his thought apparently is this idea, that there cannot be any other real ambition on the part of the Negroes of the United States except amalgamation.

The first thing for the white people to do is to get that idea out of their heads. What Negroes want is good work and decent wages, safe homes in clean places, real education for their children; the right to enter and be served in public places and to meet socially people who want to meet them. When beyond this the Negroes vehemently oppose laws against intermarriage, that does not mean they advocate laws compelling persons to marry anyone unwilling to marry them. No, Negroes are resenting public insult and asking for the same protection for their women which civilized people give to civilized women and ought to give to uncivilized women.

Surely there must be civilized methods of keeping people from intermingling their blood with others if they are unwilling. So far as you personally are concerned, the problem is easy! Refuse to marry with such people! If they ask you to marry them, say no! There is no compulsion. The difficulty comes of course when you are determined not simply to speak for yourself and your own views, but for somebody else. You have no business to do that. You have a perfect right to express your views clearly to your children, your relatives and others; to say that on the whole it is better for people of the same race to marry; and here in nine out of ten cases I should agree with you. It is bad enough to have the Negro question walking along the street without inviting it into your parlor. But beyond that the assumption that you are going to choose not simply your own companions but companions for everybody else, of course, is nonsense. You have a right to choose your own wife. You have no right to choose mine or John Smith's. It may be that some time in the far future people will get it into their heads that brown skins look as well as white. At present, you white people doubt this and you have a right to your opinion. Meantime, the mass of the white and colored people have made up their minds that they do not desire to intermarry; without a vast and revolutionary change in their present opinions, therefore, they will not intermarry. And this decision is not because of law but by reason of inner

will and group opinion. It does not, therefore, constitute any real problem. If individual people want to marry, let them; if they do not, do not compel them.

In the meantime, comes the main problem. How are two races going to get along together without wholesale intermarriage, but with increasing cultural equality? We have had a picture of "bi-racialism" in the South and Dr. Stoddard did not understand why some of you laughed when he spoke of it; it was because he has not ridden in "Jim Crow" cars. We have. The thing simply does not work. You might imagine by hearing his description of the South that you had a beautiful situation down there with both races perfectly happy; each getting along on their own side of the racial fence with no difficulty in the ordinary walks of life. Of course, it is not true. If it were true, most of this audience would not be here. We have left the South simply because the situation down there is intolerable for a man that wants to develop in any sort of natural way.

Take for instance the question of schools. You can certainly make the colored school just as good as the white school. But as a matter of fact, everybody knows that this does not happen because the community cannot bear the cost of two good school systems. As a result, you have one private citizen in Chicago actually supplying schoolhouses for a dozen states in the South which they cannot build for themselves. The Nation ought to be ashamed of this flat failure of "Bi-racialism." It is ashamed of it. You cannot furnish two separate systems of public schools and have them both decent. Consequently, the Negroes get the worst schools.

Again you deplore social contact between white and colored people. You are going to raise a Community Chest. The Committee meets for luncheon at the hotel. All of the workers are going there to discuss, confer and learn about the campaign for the chest. Well, there are colored workers—are they going to the luncheon? If they do not, where will they get their knowledge and inspiration? Is that social equality or is it bi-racialism? Shall you have the colored people sit in one room and talk with the whites by telephone, or are you going to be reasonable beings and say, sit down and let us talk about things of common interest to us both.

This is the only way things can be done. It is not possible

in a modern world to separate people by vertical partitions. And who was it that made such group and racial separation impossible under modern methods? Who brought 15 million black folks over-seas? Who went around the world with hammers and warships knocking down all kinds of barriers which keep races apart? Who was it that made the story we tell to our children with many adjectives of how we went to the gates of Japan and knocked and said, "Let us in. You cannot be a hermit nation. You cannot separate yourselves from the world in this way!" Very well. The world has come together in an organization which you can no more unscramble than you can unscramble eggs. The only method of making the inevitable contact of races bearable and profitable is to make it the contact of educated and cultured people. [applause.]

## Rebuttal by Dr. Stoddard

**FIRST** of all, let me clear up one or two points, that possibly I did not make sufficiently clear in my first speech. Immediately after the civil war there certainly were some groups of white enthusiasts, the extremists among the abolitionist party, who did promise or at least led the Negroes at that time to expect social equality and eventual racial amalgamation. That is a matter of historical certainty. There were such groups—I do not know how large they were—but they had great effect upon the Negroes in many parts of the south during the reconstruction period.

In the second place, in regard to social equality. History shows beyond a doubt that wherever widely distinct social groups have inhabited the same territory and there have been no social barriers to keep them from social intercourse, that rapid racial amalgamation has been the result. Now this isn't an individual,—it is a collective, a racial matter. There is much more involved than the personal tastes and predilections of individuals. Family relations—marriage—has always been considered a province of the state and subject to state regulation, from time immemorial. And since with the nearby examples of Mexico and the Caribbean Latin American republics with their political and social and cultural consequences of mixed-blood communities—examples that reinforce what is generally known from the teaching of history,—white America has resolved that this shall be prevented insofar as public opinion, supplemented by law can effect it.

Now let me try in a few moments that are left me to emphasize once more what I think is the very hopeful aspect of this evolution that I call bi-racialism. I am not quite so ignorant of southern conditions as Dr. DuBois would make me out. I know something of the discriminations and the injustices which the Negroes in the south have endured. I have talked about these matters not merely with many white men in the south but also with certain of the leaders of the Negro race living there. A great part of the trouble is that this proposed bi-racial system is as yet only in its embryo stage—it is only started. When we see the good that has been done by the com-

mittees on Interracial Cooperation, when we see them meeting regularly not merely to straighten out a critical situation that has arisen in some community but to prevent critical situations from arising, from becoming grievances and friction and trouble at the start, and trying to iron out the difficulty,—there you see a situation which was not existent a generation ago. Now I believe that there you have a line of development on which to build, there you have something that you cannot laugh down, that you cannot sneer at, that you cannot be cynical about, something that should be encouraged, that should be helped; because if you take the other line it lands you in bitterness, in mutual recrimination, and in growing racial dislike, and that will mean nothing but misfortune and disaster in the future. Intelligent Negroes, it seems, should depend upon this bi-racial system for working out the present inequalities and injustices. Those Negroes who have faith in the United States and their race should certainly not refuse their assent to a genuine bi-racial system which will enable them to remain themselves and to work out their own peculiar gifts, their own special aptitudes, which will enable them to build a genuine culture primarily their own here on American soil. From the cultural viewpoint, as well as the political, the social, the economic, it seems to me that parallelism—even if it be in some ways not perfect, even if there be a long road to travel before it can evolve out of its present embryonic stage—that therein lies the Negroes best cultural asset as well as his hope in other directions. [applause].

**MR. MOORE:** I want to express my appreciation to everyone in this auditorium for confirming our faith that we could have such a debate as this, on this big scale, and that every single person present would take it as a good intellectual, spiritual, sporting proposition and that nobody has got excited . . . .

## **Closing Statement by Dr. DuBois**

**I** DO not think that it is necessary that anything be added to what has been said. The case has been put before you prettily, and I venture simply to emphasize one thought in conclusion. If you are going to settle things in the United States by setting aside one people in a fairly air tight compartment and telling them to develop themselves, when you know perfectly well there can be no such thing as segregated development there, then remember that the proposal made them not made simply for black folk in America or even solely for the darker millions of Africa and Asia. Oh, no. If there is any number of you white people here who think you are included in the Nordic supreme people, you may just as well get that out of your minds. No, the Nordic people who are the supermen of the world do not include among themselves, not only the colored people, but a lot of questionable white people living around Middle and Eastern Europe, on the Mediterranean Sea, and in Spain and Italy and France who are also far from the Nordic Holy of Holies. I notice in Dr. Stoddard's books there are even doubts about most of Ireland which would lead us to conclude that they are not altogether among God's elect, and must be put outside of the people who own and run the world.

The whole Nordic theory of the Superman assumes that civilization and culture is a gift of the few from above and never arises from the great masses of men, the masses of ordinary people. I wonder if that is not the initial and final mistake of men like Dr. Stoddard? I wonder if the future is not going to show that the civilization of the world is the gift of the Few simply because only the few have a chance to develop and that when the millions of all people, white and black, yellow and brown, have real opportunity, that civilization in its highest and best form is coming from them and not from the present aristocracy? [applause.]